

Eur J Pediatr (2008) 167:131
DOI 10.1007/s00431-007-0459-2

BOOK REVIEW

K. Rose, J.N. van den Anker (eds): Guide to paediatric clinical research

**Basel-Freiburg-Paris-London-New York-Bangalore-Bangkok-Singapore-Tokyo-Sydney:
Karger, 2007**

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Received: 21 February 2007 / Accepted: 21 February 2007 / Published online: 20 March 2007
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This guide in paediatric clinical research reflects quite accurately the increased consciousness of the necessity as well as the difficulties of clinical research in children and adolescents. “Children deserve at least the same access to innovation as adults” is a basic premise of this multi-author book. The authors specifically address the question for the European countries in which live over a hundred million children. They summarize European recommendations which were written following an intervention of the European Community for “Better medicines for children”. The European regulation on better medicines for children intends: (1) to increase the development of and information on medicinal products for the paediatric population, (2) to increase marketing authorizations of medicines for the use in children, and (3) to ensure that children’s medicines are subject to high quality research and that children are not subjected to unnecessary clinical trials. This last point is especially important; it emphasizes the necessity that paediatric researchers must be highly qualified in identifying age-related differences, which are extremely important. This is very well addressed in most of the chapters of the book: children are indeed not a homogeneous population.

Ethical challenges specific to the paediatric population are well addressed. Rather than supporting a distinction

between therapeutic and non therapeutic research, which is correctly considered as artificial, the authors stress the importance of the Helsinki declaration as reference and the necessity of categorizing studies with regard to importance of risks and benefits. The use of consent and assent of children is well discussed and an overview of legal prescriptions in various countries is included. Technical and methodological issues are discussed as well as the specific challenges of research in very small children.

The book is a very good guide for paediatric researchers but also for other scientists interested in these very specific aspects of paediatric research. Especially the notion that harmful effects of drugs or interventions may be restricted to specific developmental periods can not be stressed enough. It justifies also more non therapeutic research on various aspects of normal development, which is of permanent importance for the identification of especially vulnerable periods. This is a very delicate aspect, which we all should communicate to the population, because many strong opponents to paediatric research would at least like to ban non therapeutic research in children.

To be recommended warmly to everyone involved with research in children!

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